

Edwin Mayor

*Martis xii. die Aprilis 1698 Anno
Regn. Regis Willielmi Tertii
Angliæ, &c. Decimo.*

T His Court doth desire Mr. *Bagshaw* to Print his Sermon, preached at the Cathedral Church of *St. Pauls*, on *Sunday* the *3d.* of this Instant *April*; before the Lord Mayor, and Aldermen of this City.

GOODFELLOW.

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A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H E D

Before the Right Honourable the

L o r d M a y o r

A N D

A L D E R M E N

Of this C I T Y.

A T T H E

Cathedral Church of St. P A U L S
on *Sunday 3d. of April*

By H. B A G S H A W, A. M.

L O N D O N

Printed for Sam. Keble at the Turks Head over against
Fetter-Lane, in Fleet-Street, 1698.

AS PER M.O.

AND

OLD M.O.

AND

OLD M.O.

ON 2nd day of April

TO THE BARRISTERS

LONDON

AND

TO
Sir JOHN JOHNSON, Kt.
AND
One of the Court of ALDERMEN.

Sir,

Y Our having made choice of this particular Discourse, and being your self in all respects a most eminent example of the Duties it recommends; As it gives you a double title to the performance, so, I hope, it will in some measure excuse the freedom I take in honouring it with your name, and in publishing my thoughts on this Subject as your own by Approbation; I heartily wish they may be in the least instrumental towards promoting the true interest of Religion among us, but if the success be not answerable, there is yet a certain secret satisfaction which is the necessary result of a well grounded Intention.

I am not ignorant with what profound Learning and persuasive eloquence this Subject has been already treated, insomuch that it may seem a great piece of vanity to trouble the World with another Discourse of of this nature, (especially when 'tis almost as difficult

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to

Epistle Dedicatory

to write any thing new upon it, as it is to form any thing material against it) but since this is purely calculated for the better guidance and direction of Christian practice; I hope the plainness and simplicity of it's dress will admit of a better natur'd construction; and that your wonted goodness (a quality well known to all those who are so happy as to be of your acquaintance) will incline you to Patronize this Discourse, and to accept the Dedication as a testimony of gratitude and respect, from

Your most Obliged

Most faithful Humble Servant,

H. BAGSHAW.

St. Matt.

St. Matt. XXI. *part of the 13th. ver.*

My House shall be called the House of Prayer.

THese words were spoken by our Blessed Saviour by way of reproof to those persons, whom he found buying and selling in the Temple at *Jerusalem*; and to let them know how much they prophaned that Sacred Pile, which had been dedicated to the worship and Service of God, by turning it to an Exchange, or Market-place, where their whole business was cunningly to undermine their Brethren, and to make the greatest advantages they could of each other in their way of Dealing and Traffick. This infamous abuse of his Fathers House exasperated our Blessed Lord, and made him express his resentments of such an Indignity and Affront by overthrowing the *Tables of the Money-Changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves*, as we read in the Verse immediately foregoing: As if he had said, tho' your practice hitherto hath been by no means answerable to that awful reverence you ought to pay a Place

of that Nature ; yet notwithstanding it shall be restored to it's Primitive use, set apart, and appropriated to the work of Devotion, implied in these words, *My House shall be called the House of Prayer.*

The design of this Discourse is to recommend the duty of frequenting those Places, which it hath pleased Almighty God to set apart for the performance of Religious Duties, which I shall endeavour to inforce by shewing,

I. That such places do justly challenge an extraordinary respect and reverence from us.

II. By shewing what influence the distinguishing respect, which we owe to them, ought to have on our lives and Actions, as also what qualifications are necessary to accompany us in our attendance on them.

First then, I am to prove that we ought to have an extraordinary respect and reverence for those Places, which it hath pleased God to set apart for the performance of Divine Worship.

In speaking to which head, I would not be so understood, as tho' these Holy Places were to be esteemed or revered upon the account of any internal sanctity inherent in them, or that the regard we ought to bear to them should be terminated in the Places themselves ; but only that

that we ought to esteem and respect them in a relative sense, as being appointed by God as the proper Seats and Instruments of His Worship and adoration, and which He has promised to sanctifie with His Divine Presence, *When but two or three are gathered together in his Name.*

'Tis true indeed, God cannot properly be said to be absent from any place, who fills the Universe with his Omnipresence, but with respect to His special acception and readiness to assist the Prayers and Supplications of such, who call upon him in his Holy Temples, we may affirm according to the Scripture Phrase, *Surely this place is no other than the House of God;* and by consequence to be esteemd and respected by us with that profound submission and awful Reverence, which is due to the Sanctuary of the Lord.

And that more especially for these following reasons.

1. Because of that different respect, which God Himself bears to things set apart to his own Worship, from what he does to all other things of common and ordinary use, of which we can't have a stronger Argument than the many and remarkable Judgments pour'd down by God upon such profligate Offenders.

ders, who have presumed to violate by Sacrilegious means, things consecrated to the more immediate and peculiar use and service of Himself. And tho' History, both Sacred and profane, abounds with many Instances of this kind, yet I shall content my self at present with only marking out two of them, which whether they are more exemplary for their punishment, or to be abhorred for their Crime is a Question not easily determined. The first I shall mention is *Antiochus*, who, when all his projects were frustrated, his Commanders fallen, and his hopes cut off, with the flower of his Army, whilst he was reflecting with himself upon the happiness he had lost, and the misery he sustained; his Conscience immediately flies in his face, and represents to him those wicked practices which had occasion'd his fall, and he repenting too late, recites the black Catalogue after this manner, *Now I remember the evils I did at Jerusalem, how I took the vessels of Gold and Silver, I perceive therefore that for this cause these evils are come upon me, and behold I perish for grief in a strange Land.*

The other Instance is, that Monster of iniquity and profaneness the great *Belshazzar*, who having made a great Feast to entertain the Nobles

bles of his Court, commanded (as the Prophet Daniel informs us) the Golden and Silver vessels, which his Father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the Temple, to be brought unto him, that himself and his Princes, his Wives and his Concubines might drink therein : One would have thought the heavy Judgments, inflicted on his Fathers Head for the like Crimes, might have been a sufficient warning to him not to break thro' the bounds which God had set between things Sacred and Prophane, and, by such a daring instance of impiety, bid defiance to the Almighty. *The most high God* (says the Prophet speaking to Belshazzar on this occasion) gave Nebuchadnezzar thy Father a Kingdom, and Majesty, and Glory, and Honour ; but, when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride he was deposed from his Kingly Throne, and they took his Glory from him : he was driven from the S^{ons} of Men, and his heart was made like the Beasts, and his dwelling was with wild Asses, they fed him with Grass like Oxen, and his Body was wet with the dew of Heaven, till he knew that the most High God ruled in the Kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will. One would have thought, I say, that this Vial of Gods wrath, which was pour'd out on the Father for his Sacriledg, might have had

had some influence upon the Son, who knew all this; but he, as if he had been desirous of getting a renown by that Crime, or one, that thought the wickedness of the deposed Prince was intailed upon his Successour together with the Scepter, could not forbear making the Sacred Vessels of the Temple the unhappy Instruments of his Luxury; but alas how soon did the Scene change, and the very same night, that he was entertaining himself in this manner, his Sentence was written in lively Characters upon the wall by the Finger of the Almighty: *His knees smote one against another, the joynts of his loyns were loosed,* and the tragedy concluded in the loss of his Kingdom together with his life. Neither are we to wonder why God should shew such a shining instance of his wrath and fiery indignation against such an audacious Precedent of Impiety, since his prophaning the Vessels of the Temple was in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either he did not beleive what God said, or that he did not fear what he could do. And that we might not form a false Judgment, and apprehend, that these signal punishments were the reward of any other crimes, which in his life time he had committed, the same Prophet positively assures

us. For thou, O Belshazzar, says he, hast lifted up thy self against the Lord of Heaven, and they have brought the Vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy Lords, thy Wives and thy Concubines have drunk Wine in them; and the God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified; And then he proceeds to interpret the Judgment pronounced against him; that God hath numbred his Kingdom and finished it, that he is weighed in the Ballance and found wanting, that his Kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians: After which it follows, in that night was Belshazzar the King of the Chaldeans slain.

It is not from hence to be concluded, that God do's alway shew such remarkable instances of his displeasure on the heads of all Sacrilegious Intruders, or such, as violate either things or places consecrated to the more immediate use and service of himself; it is sufficient, that his Justice does by some eminent examples of this kind assert it self, tho' at other times it may suffer for a while Persons and Families raised upon the ruines of Churches and enriched with the spoils of Sacrilege to flourish and thrive like a green Bay-tree: It do's not become us to inquire or examine what is the reason of so a wise a dispensation.

It is sufficient to my present purpose, that he does by some convincing instance of his vengeance, very often proclaim to all the World, that he will execute Judgments on those, who will not reverence his Sanctuary. Should the Justice of God alwaies interpose, and observe the same measures in other Crimes of the like nature the frequency of his Judgments would probably be objected against that Miraculous Power, by which they were effected : and Prophane and Irreligious men would be apt to conclude, they were no more than the ordinary effects of Chance or Providence ; but, be that as it will : Thus much, I think, I may venture to affirm, that there is no person, who has either known or read of many notorious instances of Families enrich'd by such impious practices, but may have likewise observed, that Providence has, sooner or later, blasted their Prosperity, by some severe and unexpected visitation. Nay so Jealous does God declare himself of the honour of his Sanctuary, and the place of his Holy Presence, that he smote *Uzzah* for but endeavouring to support the tottering Ark : Nor could the sincerity of his intentions alter the nature of the fact : It is true indeed, many have
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been too apt of late, in instances of the like nature, to depend too much upon the force of a sincere meaning, as tho', that were alone able to bear the guilt of all their Sacrilegious impieties; but we may learn from this Judgment, which beset him, that the pretended sincerity of our intentions is no such preservative, as totally to secure us, and if the errors of our judgments and consciences carry us on to the commission of wicked practices we may be answerable for the one, if not for the other. And this I the rather mention, because it is a frequent Artifice among some men, to excuse their Rapine and Sacrilege with the blessed name of Reformation; but by them most unjustly applied.

A second Reason why we ought to pay a distinguishing respect to Places of this nature, is grounded upon the example and command of God himself, who is pleased to appoint this difference. In the most early times of the World, we find God giving his express injunctions to his Servant *Jacob* to build him an Altar, which, when the holy Patriarch had performed in obedience to a special and extraordinary Command, what reverence does he express to it? and what a profound esteem does he

shew towards it? *How dreadful*, says he, *is this place*; for surely tis no other than the *House of God*. It was not any internal worth or sanctity inherent in the place it self, that either did, or could, procure it this esteem from the holy *Patriarch*, for by nature there is no distinction in places; but because it pleased God to appoint and set apart this place, as peculiar to himself and his own use. If it be asked, for what reason God may be supposed to bear a different respect to Places consecrated to his own Worship, from what he bears to others design'd for the common and ordinary uses of life, it might be answered, that the Divine Will and Pleasure, when once reveal'd and attested carry with them sufficient reason and conviction from the authority of the Revealer to any sober and disinterested Enquirers. We are not at liberty to dispute and contest the grounds upon which the Will of God proceeds, or by which it is determin'd: It is sufficient for us, that it hath pleased him to make known his Will to us by Revelation: Our duty is obedience and submission; but so far as we may be allowed to reason upon Divine Subjects, we may probably presume that God Almighty, by fixing upon and instituting of some places

to this peculiar end, was pleased to excite and promote the Devotion and Piety of his people by that awful reverence, with which they are naturally apt to affect our thoughts.

A third Reason, why we ought to bear a distinguishing respect to Places set apart for the Worship of God is, that reverence and esteem which is due to all things of what nature or qualities soever, whether persons or places, that are appropriated more immediately to His holy Service and Worship. *He that despiseth you despiseth me*, saith our Saviour to His disciples, *and he that despises Me despiseth him, that sent Me*; which Sentence, tho' applied by our Blessed Saviour to such as should abuse, or vilifie the Sacred Office of his Disciples, may with equal verity, be pronounced, tho' in a subordinate degree, of those, who sacrilegiously invade the Temples and Patrimony of the Church, and serve all their mean and sordid ends upon her. *Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in*, says St. Paul in this first Epistle to the Corinthians, *or despise ye the Church of God*? The Apostle would have no feasting, or, otherwise, lawful freedoms practis'd at the Altar, which had been set apart and consecrated to a more Divine and spiritual entertainment. It had been no excuse for the

Corinthians

Corinthians to have pleaded, that they practis'd only the innocent freedoms of Conversation, and us'd the Church of God as a means to promote mutual freindship and society among themselves; these ends, however excellent in themselves, were to be attained in their proper and ordinary places: And they were not under any pretence, or colour, or for any design or end whatsoever, to abuse things, that had been dedicated to the immediate Service of God, to any other ends than those, for which they were design'd.

If it be demanded, whether the Consecration of Places does communicate any special sanctity or holiness to them, beyond that of other things and places of ordinary and common use: I answer, that tho' it does not, yet it will not from hence follow, that therefore they are no more to be regarded by us than other things and places are: For the places are already sacred by the donation and appointment of them to the Service and Worship of God: And upon this account it is, that we affirm they are to be respected, not as absolutely, but relatively Holy because of that relation they have to him, who is the Fountain of all holiness. If it be further asked, to what purpose then is the Consecration

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secration of Things or Places, which are already Sacred by their donation and appointment to this question I make answer, that by their Consecration they are solemnly declared to be so : And unless this manner of pronouncing, or declaring places holy were admitted, it is not easie to imagine how the common people should know what places they were to respect as holy, and what not; besides thus much at least we cannot deny but that such places, as are peculiarly and solemnly appointed for Divine Service, are more apt to quicken us with a greater spirit of Devotion than others of ordinary and common use. A reflection of this nature cannot but correct our wandring thoughts, and will more forcibly engage our affections than all the most pressing arguments, though pointed with the clearest reason, and dressed up under all the beauties of Rhetorick and elocution. And therefore, tho' these external things are neither essential parts of our devotion, nor, by any virtue of their own, direct occasions of it ; yet because it hath pleased God after this manner, by sanctifying these inferiour means to our spiritual improvement, to help us forward in the exercise of our duty ; it will better become us to adore his Wisdom, in thus expressing

expressing his Compassion to our Infirmities, than by fondly relying upon our own, to put a slight upon such assistances, and unthankfully frustrate the gracious methods contrived for our Salvation. And thus have I finished my first general Head proposed to be spoken to from these words ; namely, that such places as are set apart for the performance of Religious Duties, do justly challenge an extraordinary respect and reverence from us. I proceed now to the second Branch of my Text, wherein I promised to shew, what influence the distinguishing respect, we owe to those solemn Places of divine worship, ought to have on our lives and Actions, as also what qualifications are necessary to accompany us in our attendance on them.

In speaking to which head I shall not undertake any such exact enumeration, as may conclude all the general branches of our duty, but shall confine my self, in the remaining part of this Discourse, to these three following ; Sincerity, Reverence, and Attention.

By Sincerity I mean an upright intention, by which we direct our devotion to that proper end, for which these Holy Places were design'd viz. the knowledg of Gods Will in order to the

the due performance of it. This honest simplicity of heart is that which our Blessed Saviour represents by the good ground, where alone it was the Seed sprung up and bore fruit; and he that brings not this along with him, howsoever he may fondly flatter himself, retains only the shadow not the substance of Christianity. And to this we may probably impute that small influence, which the Word of God hath on the minds of some among us, who come to the places of Divine Service for the same end, that they frequent the Exchange or the Court, not out of any sense of Devotion or Piety towards God, but in compliance with their own interest which amounts to no more than a State-conformity taken up in favour of their secular ease and profit to avoid the punishments, or to grasp the Dignities presented to them. 'Tis with difficulty that they prevail upon themselves to come, and with great impatience that they sit out the Service. The Custom and Manners of the Country where they live, oblige them to feign a decent Hypocrisie to avoid the Censure of the publick, or the imputation of Singularity; nay, even when they are in Gods presence, as tho' it were a place of Pernance, or confinement; they contrive, by all the little Arts

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they can, how they may render their stay the more tollerable, and divert that time, which they look on as the Parenthesis of their lives.

Others likewise there are, who are more constant attendants on Divine Worship, who bring only their speculative faculties along with them, and leave their wills and affections behind them: They covet to know Gods Will for any purpose, but to practice it, and are Hearers of the Word, only to become more knowing, without ever suffering it to reach any further than their understandings, which is so fatal a defect as blasts our pursuits, tho' of things in themselves never so excellent. This we find exemplifi'd in *Simon Magus*, who, tho' he coveted a thing in it self very desirable, the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, yet desiring it upon undue conditions, and for sinister ends, he was immersed in the gall of bitterness, and at last advanced to that height of Blasphemy, as to set up himself for God thereby becoming a Lasting Monument how untaste it is to prevaricate in Holy Things. But there are a set of men who deal yet more unsincerely in their attendance on the Service of God, and hear the Word insidiously, on purpose to collect matter of objection and cavil against the Preacher, that

that listen attentively, but to no other end than to remark incoherencies and defects in the matter of it; which when they think they have started they have gained their design, and never use in any measure the same proportion of diligence how they may improve the doctrine delivered to the benefit of their Souls, and their everlasting happiness in a life to come: The Precepts and Threatnings declared against their darling Lusts are continually fretting and perplexing them, whereupon they are resolved to discharge their malice against the Preacher. But I shall not insist upon this reflection in this place, because I will not suppose any, who compose this Auditory so very disingenuous as to be concerned in any part of it.

A second Qualification, which is necessary to accompany us in our attendance on Divine Service at the House of God, is Reverence. If we look back upon the past Ages of the World we shall find that even among the Pagan Princes a Reverend deportment was always used in the Worship of their Deities, and their Devotions perform'd in the most expressive postures of Reverence according to the different modes of the Countries they lived in; insomuch that *Numa* made a Law that no man should meddle

with divine things, or worship their Gods in passing, or by accident, but make it a set and solemn business: And every one knows, that has the least acquaintance with ancient History, with how great ceremony and solemnity their Oracles were consulted. How great a shame then is it for Christians to abate of that reverence to the True God, which the very Heathens allowed their False Ones.

Now this proceeds sometimes for want of that habitual reverence we should always have to the Place of Gods Presence, and sometimes for want of actual exciting it; For if the habit lye only dormant in us, and be not awakened by a lively and vigorous consideration, it avails us as little for edification, as the habitual strength of a man does for labour, when he will not exert it to that end: When we enter into the gates of *Sion* we should do it with other sentiments and apprehensions than when we enter into any other place of common and civil use, considering that 'tis the Temple of the God of Heaven, the Seat of His more Immediate Presence, the Instrument of our Salvation, or upon abuse, of our Ruine: for the greater opportunities and advantages we have to improve our selves in the knowledg of God and Religion

Religion, the more in proportion will be expected from us. And sure this, if duly apprehended cannot but awaken our endeavours to controule all trifling fancies, and make us frequent these Holy Places with a suitable reverence and becoming affection; to this purpose we find the Royal Psalmist pathetically crying out; *O how amiable are thy Tabernacles O Lord of Hosts? my Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, for a day in thy Courts is better then a thousand, &c.* and in another place, says he, *one thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple.* And as we ought to make it our deliberate choice to frequent the Place of Gods Worship, so, when we do it, 'tis our duty to stir up our selves with such solemn apprehensions, as may render us apt to receive due impressions from the Word of God, which is there delivered to us; for, where there is no reverence, 'tis not to be expected there should by any genuin or lasting obedience: Set places and set times for Divine Worship have been made use of in all Ages of the Christian Church, having been continued down to us more especially since Constantine's time:

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And as they were at first instituted for this purpose, that we might be more at leisure to retire into our selves, and seriously reflect upon the solemn Business we are going about, so we shall all of us be highly wanting to our selves, if we do not endeavour, by a strict and dayly observance of them, to improve these assistances to that Blessed End, for which they were appointed. we must take care that our Services be as free from irreverence or indecency of behaviour, as the Sacrifices of the Law were required to be from infirmity and blemish, assuring our selves that the God whom we serve, is Jealous of his Honour as well as Holy in his Nature, neither will he suffer Himself to be contemned or invaded within His Own Walls.

The third and last Qualification, which I shall insist on, as a necessary ingredient of our publick Devotion, is Attention. This is a duty so indispensably necessary, that without it all places are alike and equally insignificant, for he that attends not to the Duties and Offices of the Church, the warmest and most persuasive devotion in the Priest shall affect him no more, than the most artful and charming strains of Musick can move a person who has lost his Hearing. We must therefore keep our minds fixed

fixed in our attendance on God in His Holy Temples. Inadvertency is a folly and lightness in Civil and Temporal affairs; but tis in Divine, for a man to be in the presence of any one, especially his superiour, and not at all to mind what he says, the rules of conversation interpret no small instance of Contempt; yet this vile affront do all those put upon God who in their attendance on his Service give it no attention: And much more they, who come to the Church only to gratifie their curiosity, or what is yet worse to pursue some ill inclination, or vicious design. Notwithstanding which I am afraid the practice is not more impious than tis common, for there are many, who frequent the Gates of Zion, who if at each time they should be called to an account, I doubt could shew but little fruits of their edification thereby; and this may be one reason why, so many persons grow old in their ignorance, understanding their Baptismal Vow as little when they should perform it, as they did when they made it, and are ready to leave this World before they know any thing of the other which is to succeed it. This want of Attention forestalls all possibility of good; how shall the preaching the Word of God convince the understanding

understanding, or perswade the affections, which do's not so much as enter the imagination? so that in this case the Seed seems more cast away than in any of those instances the Parable gives: In those it still fell upon the Soil? but in this it never reaches that, but is scattered and dissipated as with a mighty wind, by those wandring and vitious thoughts, which have prepossessed the mind.

Let none therefore presume to approach such Sacred Places, till they have turned out all distracted fancies, and have their faculties free and vacant for those nobler objects which will there present themselves; and when they have so disposed themselves for Attention, then let them contrive to improve that attention to the best advantage. This will render what they hear operative and effective, and unless we employ our selves in this manner in these places, and attentively apply what is said to practice and experience; the Word of God may fill our heads with high notions, nay with many speculative truths, which amounts to no more than the Theology of the Apostate Angels, and will as little advantage us. To conclude all, let our Attention, I say, be reduced to practice, *that so others seeing our good works may glorify our Father, which is in Heaven.* And if we fail here, the most assiduous diligence in all the former will be but lost labour: let us mean never so well attend never so close, if after all we do not practise, all the rest will serve but to inhanche our guilt. Let us all therefore *keep a steady eye upon that mark and press towards it;* as the Apostle did, faithfully and diligently frequent the places of Gods Holy Service, that we may learn His Divine Will and pleasure and finally partake his promises; *which God of his infinite Mercy grant to us all, &c.*

To whom with the Son and Holy Spirit Three Persons, but one God, be ascribed as is most due, &c.

